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Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

Summary

The present report contains resolutions and decisions adopted at the recent sessions of the regional commissions that call for action by the Economic and Social Council or are brought to its attention. The report covers the period between the Council's substantive sessions of 1998 and 1999. During the first half of 1999, four of the five regional commissions held their regular sessions: the Economic Commission for Europe held its fifty-fourth session at Geneva from 4 to 6 May; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its fifty-fifth session at Bangkok from 22 to 28 April; the Economic Commission for Africa held the thirty-third session of the Commission and the twenty-fourth meeting of its Conference of Ministers at Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 May, and the nineteenth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole from 30 April to 4 May; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held its twentieth session at Beirut from 27 to 28 May. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which holds its sessions on a biennial basis, did not meet in 1999.

* E/1999/100 and Add.1.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Council

A. Economic Commission for Europe

1. At its fifty-fourth session, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) unanimously endorsed the following recommendation, which is being submitted to the Economic and Social Council for action in accordance with rule 50 of the terms of reference and rules of procedure of ECE:

Matters arising from the work of subsidiary bodies requiring decision by the Commission

The Commission endorsed the recommendation that the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration (MOLA) be granted a standing character, as proposed in document E/ECE/1373. This was on the basis of the Commission's recognition of the MOLA group's work in the promotion of land privatization and land registration systems in the ECE region and of the need for such work to continue, in particular for the benefit of countries with economies in transition that are moving from traditional to modern systems of land administration.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

2. At the first meeting of its fifty-fifth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) approved the following draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council:

Change of the name of Macau to Macau, China in the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has recommended that the name "Macau" in paragraphs 2 and 4 of the terms of reference of the Commission should be changed to "Macau, China", effective as from 20 December 1999, with the objective of enabling Macau to continue thereafter as an associate member of the Commission,

Decides to amend paragraphs 2 and 4 of the terms of reference of the Commission accordingly.

C. Economic Commission for Africa

3. At its thirty-third session, held at Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 May 1999, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) recommended the following draft resolutions for adoption by the Council:

Draft resolution I

Programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2000–2001

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 41/203 of 19 December 1986 and subsequent relevant resolutions on programme planning,

Recalling further Commission resolution 809 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on new directions for the Economic Commission for Africa, and in particular the programme structure which was characterized by congruence between substantive organizational charts and programmes to foster synergy and achieve greater efficiency and impact in the delivery of service,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution 53/207 of 18 December 1998 on programme planning, by which the Assembly adopted the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 submitted by the Secretary-General, as amended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination,

Having noted the report on the work of the Commission 1996–1998, and having examined the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2000–2001 contained in document E/ECA/CM.24/7,

Convinced that the proposals contained in the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2000–2001 will enhance ECA's role as an important contributor in the process of Africa's economic and social rebirth,

Recognizing, however, that the economic development of Africa and the reduction of poverty are severely affected by, among other factors the socio-economic impact of conflicts and the resulting large-scale population displacements, and realizing that the challenge of post-conflicts reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction require reorientation of development strategies and resource arrangements,

1. *Commends* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and the staff of the Commission for the considerable work that has been undertaken in the last three years to advance institutional reforms and renewal at the Economic Commission for Africa to enable it to remain at the forefront of policy innovations for Africa's socio-economic development;

2. *Endorses* the work programme and priorities of the Commission for the biennium 2000–2001 as contained in document E/ECA/CM.24/7, taking into account the discussion and related recommendations made at the thirty-third session of the Commission;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and member States, in collaboration with bilateral and multilateral partners, to undertake a special initiative to examine issues related to the socio-economic impact of conflicts on the region's development, based on a research project, and to organize a meeting to discuss the findings and make recommendations aimed at defining appropriate post-conflict assistance programmes and financing strategies;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and member States, in collaboration with development partners, to undertake the necessary studies that would provide a better appreciation and limit the effects of the World Trade Organization agreements and of globalization on the region's economies;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in making his proposals for the 2000–2001 programme budget, to give special consideration to the development needs of the African region by providing the Commission with adequate resources to enable it to adequately respond to the new development challenges facing Africa;

6. *Calls upon* the General Assembly of the United Nations and its second and fifth Committees to ensure that adequate resources are made available to the Commission for the implementation of this work programme.

Draft resolution II

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 52/187 of 18 December 1997 and 53/182 of 15 December 1998, in which the Assembly decided to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in the first semester of the year 2001 and accepted the offer of the European Union to host the Conference,

Recognizing the important role played by the Economic Commission for Africa in the preparatory process for the First and Second United Nations Conferences on Least Developed Countries,

Noting that the mandate of the Conference is to assess the results of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s at the country level, review the implementation of international support measures, particularly in the areas of official development assistance, debt, investment and trade, and to consider the formulation and adoption of appropriate national and international policies and measures for sustainable development of least developed countries and their progressive integration into the world economy,

1. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to provide, in collaboration with the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in his capacity as the Secretary-General of the Conference, support to African least developed countries in their preparation for the Conference at the country, regional and global levels;

2. *Invites* the Executive Secretary to ensure that the Economic Commission for Africa makes substantive technical contributions to the Conference and its preparatory process;

3. *Requests* the least developed countries' bilateral, regional and multilateral development partners, in particular the European Union, the host of the Conference, and the United Nations Development Programme, to provide adequate technical and financial assistance to least developed countries to ensure a substantive and effective preparatory process for the Conference at the country level;

4. *Also requests* the Secretary-General of the Conference to intensify his efforts to mobilize resources for the participation of representatives of the least developed countries in the envisaged regional expert-level meetings, the meetings of the intergovernmental preparatory committee and the Conference itself.

D. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

4. At its twentieth session, held at Beirut on 27 and 28 May 1999, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) approved the following draft resolutions and decisions requiring action by the Economic and Social Council:

Draft resolution I

Frequency of sessions of the sectoral committees of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Conscious of the need for uniform frequency of the sessions of all the sectoral committees,

Recalling Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolution 212 (XIX) of 7 May 1997, in which the Commission provides for the holding of the sessions of the Committee on Water Resources annually,

Recalling also Commission resolution 214 (XIX) of 7 May 1997, in which the Commission provides for the establishment of a technical committee on liberalization of foreign trade and economic globalization in the countries of the ESCWA region, whose meetings are to be held annually,

Recalling further that the Commission secretariat can provide support and advice to member States on request, during years in which no sessions of the sectoral committees are held,

Realizing that the sectoral committees can hold special sessions as needed, in accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure,

1. *Approves* the amendment of Commission resolutions 212 (XIX) and 214 (XIX) to the effect that the sessions of the Committee on Water Resources and the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region shall be held biennially rather than annually;

2. *Emphasizes* that the sessions of all the sectoral committees shall be held once every two years.

Draft resolution II

Redesignation of the Technical Committee

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/80 on the general policy-making structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in which the Council recalled its resolution 1982/64 of 30 July 1982, by which it established, within the Economic Commission for Western Asia, a Standing Committee for the Programme, which it designated as the Technical Committee,

Recalling also Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolution 114 (IX), in which the Commission entrusts to the Technical Committee the task of reviewing programming issues and presenting recommendations in that regard, as a preparatory committee, to the sessions of the Commission held at the ministerial level,

Recalling further the successive establishment of six technical committees of the Commission during the period from 1992 to 1997,

Wishing to avoid possible confusion between the name of the present Technical Committee and the names of the sectoral technical committees,

Decides to change the name of the Technical Committee to "Preparatory Committee".

Draft resolution III

Changes introduced in the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1998–1999

The Economic and Social Council,

Having noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1998–1999,

Having taken cognizance of the changes introduced by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia secretariat in programme activities,

Having studied the reasons and justifications for those changes, which relate to the cancellation, reformulation, addition or postponement of activities or outputs,

Aware of the need for a certain degree of flexibility in the implementation of the programme of work in order that it may include new issues directly related to it,

Approves the changes introduced in the programme of work as they appear in the annex to the report on progress made during 1998 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1998–1999.[1]

Draft resolution IV

Relocation of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to its permanent headquarters at Beirut

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolution 197 (XVII) of 31 May 1994, in which the Commission decided to submit a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council that Beirut be adopted as the permanent headquarters of the Commission,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/43 of 29 July 1994 on the permanent headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to take all steps necessary to effect the transfer of the permanent headquarters of the Commission to Beirut and to ensure that the transfer was financed within existing resources and primarily from extrabudgetary sources,

Further recalling Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolution 207 (XVIII) of 25 May 1995 on facilitating the relocation of the Commission to its permanent headquarters at Beirut, in which the Commission called on member States to take measures to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to secure the necessary resources for the implementation of Commission resolution 197 (XVII),

Recalling further Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolution 215 (XIX) of 7 May 1997 on facilitating the relocation of the Commission to its permanent headquarters at Beirut, in which the Commission requested the authorities concerned within the United Nations Secretariat to examine the possibility of utilizing the skills of local Commission staff at Amman in other areas within the United Nations or of finding ways to compensate them,

[1] E/ESCWA/C.1/20/4(Part I).

Taking cognizance of the note by the Executive Secretary on the relocation of the Commission to its permanent headquarters at Beirut,[2] which deals with all the legal, administrative, logistic and financial aspects of the transfer,

Commending the measures adopted by the Commission secretariat for the implementation of the relocation plan in accordance with a timetable that did not affect the implementation of its programmes and took into account the needs of the staff,

Commending also the measures adopted by the United Nations Secretariat to utilize the skills of the local staff at Amman in other areas within the United Nations or determine ways to compensate them,

1. *Endorses* the action taken by the Commission secretariat for the transfer of the permanent headquarters to United Nations House at Beirut by 31 December 1997, in particular the conclusion of the agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon concerning the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, signed on 27 August 1997, and the supplementary agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon relating to the occupancy and use of United Nations premises at Beirut, signed on 9 October 1997;

2. *Endorses also* the action taken by the Commission secretariat to facilitate the transfer of other United Nations offices and agencies at Beirut to United Nations House on 1 December 1998, and to devise internal mechanisms for the sharing of common services and related costs;[3]

3. *Endorses with satisfaction* the financial arrangements related to the move, made by the Commission secretariat in compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/43 of 29 July 1994, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the transfer be financed within existing resources and primarily from extrabudgetary contributions;

4. *Reiterates its expression of gratitude* to the Government of Lebanon for its financial contributions and its efforts to provide a headquarters that satisfies the requirements and needs of the United Nations and for its cooperation in complying with the provisions of the headquarters agreement signed on 27 August 1997;

5. *Expresses its gratitude* to the Government of Kuwait for its financial contribution towards the transfer of the Commission's headquarters, and to the Government of Saudi Arabia for the contribution which it made to supporting the activities of the Commission following its transfer to its permanent headquarters;

6. *Reiterates its thanks* to the Governments of Iraq and Jordan for the facilities offered to the Commission during its stay at Baghdad and Amman, respectively, and to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for facilitating the movement of staff and equipment through its territory.

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[2] E/ESCWA/20/7/Rev.1.

[3] Four tripartite memorandums of understanding relating to the occupancy and use of the United Nations premises at Beirut were signed by the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon with, respectively, three United Nations bodies (the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund) on 23 November 1998, and with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on 11 March 1999; and a memorandum of understanding concerning occupancy and use of common premises by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and United Nations offices and agencies at Beirut was signed on 24 November 1998.

Draft resolution V

Adoption of the Beirut Declaration

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia resolution 217 (XIX) of 7 May 1997 on a call for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Commission, in particular paragraph 3, in which the Commission invites the Governments of member States to take the opportunity to formulate a new vision for the region in line with regional and world developments in the coming century,

Recalling also the call by the Commission for the issuance of a declaration embodying the Commission's vision of the future and its role in coordinating the policies of member States in the economic and social spheres and broadening cooperation between them,[4]

1. *Decides* to adopt the Beirut Declaration, annexed hereto, as a new vision that defines the role and tasks of the Commission in line with regional and world developments in the coming century;

2. *Invites* member States to take inspiration from elements of the Declaration in formulating their national policies and programmes and in strengthening international and regional cooperation between themselves;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to ensure that in future the activities of the Commission take into account the content of the Declaration.

Annex

Beirut Declaration: the region of Western Asia preparing for the twenty-first century

We the representatives of the Governments of the member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, meeting at Beirut on 27 and 28 May 1999 at the twentieth session of the Commission and gathered here today to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary,

Acting in accordance with the desire of our Governments to assume their responsibilities towards their peoples in their aspiration towards integrated, sustainable development, stressing their originality and their contributions to civilization, believing in the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, aware of the development of international relations and partnership, and acting on the experience and lessons of the past, understanding the present and its dimensions and looking with confidence to the future,

Taking the opportunity offered by the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Commission,

Present our vision of the role and tasks of the Commission in line with regional and world developments in the coming century, as set out below.

1. The growth of globalism does not diminish or detract from the extreme importance of acting at the regional level. Nor does the global nature of problems preclude area-specific solutions and policies. In the trend towards globalism, with full respect for the sovereignty of States, regionalism cannot be bypassed. Cooperative arrangements within homogeneous groups, especially of small and medium-sized countries, represent a bridge between the national and the global. Moreover, development trends and requirements do

[4] E/1997/39–E/ESCWA/19/9, para. 45.

not materialize all at once throughout the world, but rather do so in the form of regional waves, in which the conditions and situations peculiar to each area must be taken into account.

2. The role and functions of the Commission are based primarily on development and economic and social cooperation, the objective being to raise the level of economic activity in Western Asia, and to maintain and strengthen economic relations between its member countries and other countries of the world. Such development can be achieved only to the extent that it is comprehensive, integrated and sustainable in both the economic and social spheres.

3. Recognition of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and settlement of disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law constitute the basis of a sound international community. However, the State is not capable by itself of achieving comprehensive, sustainable development unless there exists international cooperation in the economic and social fields that is based, on the one hand, on a just and comprehensive peace, security on equal terms, and respect for the principles of justice and international law, and on the other hand, on international relations that are balanced in all areas and based on effective international cooperation and a genuine sense of partnership on the part of donor States and international donor institutions.

4. The increasing importance of regional cooperation in the economic and social fields places a great responsibility on the Commission. As part of the United Nations system, the Commission is the natural place for dealing with issues related to such cooperation, for it is not merely a regional arrangement for expressing the needs and particularities of the region to which it belongs, but also the embodiment, at the regional level, of the universal purposes and principles set forth in the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations.

5. The future of the region, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, requires its transformation into a zone of economic and social cooperation and mutual respect of all for the rights and interests of the peoples of the region in an atmosphere of a just and comprehensive peace, security on a basis of equality, and economic and social stability. These goals can be achieved only if cooperation is strengthened between the members of the Commission, the United Nations and international financial institutions and the following objective conditions are met:

(a) The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, security on equal terms and stability in the region of Western Asia through the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions, and full respect for international legitimacy and the foundations and principles of the peace process, foremost among them being the principle of land for peace and respect for the rights of peoples and their legitimate aspirations;

(b) The creation of an environment that will stimulate economic and social cooperation and development in all domains, including cooperation between the countries of the region in the areas of water, environment and energy, which calls for a comprehensive view that takes into account the balancing of national needs and global requirements and is based on integration of the various aspects of sustainable human development, with recognition of the mutually supportive roles of an effective state administration, an efficient private sector and a sound civil society;

(c) The exertion of efforts to integrate Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia member States into the international economic and trading system, by assisting them in dealing with the rules and principles on which it is based and heightening the

advantages and at the same time limiting the drawbacks that might be involved, and by the establishment of a dialogue with the international organizations concerned;

(d) The promotion of democracy and respect for human rights, including the right to life, the right of self-determination and the right to development, and fundamental freedoms within a context of respect for national and regional characteristics and different religious, cultural and historical values. Achieving complementarity between freedom and responsibility at all levels in a State based on institutions and law constitutes a fundamental guarantee for enabling the region to continue its creative participation in the civilization of humankind;

(e) The development of the role of the Commission through support for its technical bodies and the obtainment of adequate support from the United Nations system, including the financial and human resources needed to enable the Commission to carry on its activities in the best possible way in order to be able to bolster the efforts of member States and become a basic forum in the economic and social fields with a view to promoting regional economic cooperation on a sound basis that will help to strengthen development and progress among the Commission's member States.

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

A. Economic Commission for Europe

5. At its fifty-fourth session, the Economic Commission for Europe adopted unanimously its annual report covering the period from 24 April 1998 to 6 May 1999. The matters set out below, taken from that report, are brought to the attention of the Council.

Consequences of the financial crisis in the ECE region

6. As called for in the plan of action, the ECE secretariat organized a debate on a major economic theme. This year, the theme chosen was the consequences of the financial crisis on the ECE region. The seminar was divided into three sessions, namely, (a) the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on the ECE region, with special emphasis on Western and Central Europe; (b) overcoming the crisis of the Russian economy; and (c) threats to the transition process in other economies.

South-East Europe

7. The Executive Secretary presented to the Commission a conference room paper on the theme "Recovery in South-East Europe after a settlement of the conflict in Yugoslavia: elements for a contribution by ECE". Delegations recognized that ECE has expertise in a number of areas of relevance to the post-conflict reconstruction of South-East Europe, and that such expertise should be drawn upon, wherever possible, to assist in the coordinated economic reconstruction of the region. They also asked the secretariat to elaborate further on the proposals contained in the conference room paper, and on the additional ideas expressed by delegations relating to all its areas of expertise. Delegations stressed that it was essential that activities be properly coordinated between all the organizations and institutions involved in the reconstruction effort.

Operational activities and cooperation with regional/subregional groupings, initiatives and organizations

8. The Commission recognized the importance of ECE operational activities and the contribution they made to economic integration and the strengthening of stability, peace and good-neighbourly relations among countries in the region. It invited the Executive Secretary to respond to requests for such assistance in a geographically balanced manner, and to pay special attention to requests from those countries most in need of assistance.

9. In view of the limited resources available, the Executive Secretary and ECE member States were invited to explore possibilities for providing additional financing for the Commission's operational activities, in close cooperation with the relevant financial institutions and donor organizations, in support of various types of activities, such as advisory missions, seminars and training workshops, and for developing projects within the framework of subregional groupings and initiatives, in particular the South-East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It was further recognized that ECE efforts in the Mediterranean had very often failed because of lack of financial resources, and additional efforts should therefore be made to mobilize resources with a view to responding to the specific circumstances and needs of the Commission's Mediterranean countries. In this context, the Barcelona Process was mentioned as a dynamic framework for subregional economic cooperation.

10. In order to maximize the impact of the Commission's technical assistance and provide further guidance, each principal subsidiary body was requested to look at the operational activities undertaken within its field of competence and mandate, and to identify the needs for operational activities and financing for them. The Commission requested that a synthesis of the conclusions of each principal subsidiary body's review be prepared for consideration at its fifty-fifth session.

Issues related to the work of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work

11. On the programme of work (E/ECE/1372) and the prioritization process, the Commission expressed its appreciation for the work of the Group of Experts, the secretariat and the principal subsidiary bodies in this exercise. It endorsed the new system of prioritization of principal subsidiary bodies' work programmes proposed by the Group of Experts as well as the related recommendations that:

(a) All principal subsidiary body activities using ECE regular budget resources be included in the prioritization exercise;

(b) The three-tier system of prioritization be maintained, but principal subsidiary bodies which account for less than 5 per cent of total ECE resources (human settlements, timber and sustainable energy) might, if necessary, prioritize their activities on a two-tier basis;

(c) A pro forma should be produced for individual principal subsidiary bodies to complete during the prioritization exercise;

(d) An explanatory note should be produced to accompany the new pro forma;

(e) The Chairman or a representative of the Group of Experts should attend the annual meetings between the Bureau of the Commission and the principal subsidiary body bureaux. Other informal meetings between the principal subsidiary bodies and the Group of Experts could be arranged, as necessary.

Exchange of views on cross-sectoral concerns including intersectoral linkages

12. The Commission reviewed the progress made in the integration of the two cross-sectoral concerns, namely sustainable development and gender mainstreaming, into the work programme of ECE, based on the secretariat's paper (E/ECE/1369). While noting the unevenness in the progress made across the different sectors, the Commission recognized that the integration of cross-sectoral issues was a long-term process which could only be achieved through continued action and effort. In this regard, the chairpersons of the principal subsidiary bodies expressed their commitment to support the process.

13. In relation to sustainable development, recognizing it as a subject that cut across all areas of activity of ECE, the Commission invited the Committee on Environmental Policy to review all activities related to sustainable development and make suggestions to each principal subsidiary body and to the Commission on a more systematic approach at the ECE level.

14. In the area of gender mainstreaming, the Commission expressed its desire to see further efforts made in this regard. Also in relation to gender issues, the Commission endorsed the convening of an expert meeting at the intergovernmental level, in response to the request by the General Assembly, which would review economic issues, problems and policies relating to the situation of women in ECE countries in order to provide a regional assessment for the 2000 review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Other issues would also be addressed according to the respective interests and work areas of other organizations to be involved in the preparation of this meeting. The details of the meeting would be finalized at the June 1999 ad hoc informal meeting of the Commission, based on a proposal prepared by the ECE secretariat in consultation with these organizations as well as member States.

15. The Commission also commended recent developments in intersectoral cooperation, in particular in the fields of transport and environment, as well as environment and health, and urged that further advances be made in this direction.

Fifty-fifth session of the Commission

16. The tentative dates for the holding of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission at Geneva were scheduled for 2 to 5 May 2000.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

17. At its fifty-fifth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted the resolutions summarized below, which are brought to the attention of the Council.

Resolution 55/1. Sustainable development of inland water transport in the Asia and Pacific region

18. The Commission, having noted with satisfaction the recommendations of the regional policy-level meeting on sustainable development of inland water transport, held at Nanjing, China, in September 1998, urged concerned regional members and associate members to:

(a) Integrate inland water transport within intermodal transport systems to provide door-to-door services for the movement of domestic and international traffic, thereby responding to market demand for convenient and competitive service while optimizing the economic, financial, environmental and social benefits that can be derived from each mode in the entire transport chain;

(b) Undertake detailed examination of the technical and administrative issues related to bringing national waterways into operation with the objective of facilitating international traffic;

(c) Accord appropriate priority to inland water transport in policy, planning and investment based on detailed analysis of the economic, financial, social and environmental benefits, and to promote public awareness of such benefits, thereby encouraging a modal shift to inland water transport, where appropriate;

(d) Enhance cooperation between national agencies responsible for inland water transport and water resources management for navigation purposes through coordinated national planning and the development and implementation of policies;

(e) Increase the public sector resources allocated to inland water transport to reflect the relative priority of such transport and to encourage partnerships between the public and private sectors to improve the development, management and operation of inland water transport;

(f) Encourage the following: (i) the adoption of appropriate legislation and the creation of a regulatory environment for the protection and effective utilization of inland waterways; (ii) safety in navigation, taking adequate account of the year 2000 problem; (iii) the facilitation of cargo trans-shipment between seagoing ships and inland vessels for onward distribution; (iv) the recognition and strengthening of the role in socio-economic development of country boats and small vessels operated by the informal sector, with particular reference to poverty alleviation in rural areas; (v) the utilization of dredged materials, wherever economically advantageous and socially and environmentally acceptable, to raise and revitalize farmland, strengthen bank protection and reclaim land; (vi) the development of statistical information systems to support policy, management and operational decision-making, taking adequate account of the year 2000 problem; (vii) the development of tourism along inland waterways;

(g) Establish or strengthen appropriate centres and institutional capacity to undertake studies and research to identify physical and institutional bottlenecks that are hindering the efficient development and operation of inland water transport, and to promote human resources development to address those deficiencies. Further, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to (i) assist riverine members and associate members, on request, in formulating policies and strategies to foster the development of inland water transport and its integration with other transport modes, and to encourage a modal shift of cargoes to inland water transport, where appropriate; (ii) promote technological advancement of the inland water transport sector through the provision of technical assistance; (iii) assist in increasing the awareness of policy makers and the public of the economic, social and environmental advantages of inland water transport, through the preparation and publication of informative and authentic materials for wide dissemination in the region; (iv) promote human resources development in the inland water transport sector and sharing experience through networking among riverine members and associate members within the ESCAP region, and also with countries outside the region; (v) organize, in close collaboration with the public and the private sectors, an international conference-cum-exhibition on inland water transport in conjunction with the third session of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development, to be held in 2000; and (vi) report to the Commission in 2001 on the implementation of the resolution.

Resolution 55/2. Economic and financial monitoring and surveillance in the ESCAP region

19. Against the backdrop of the ongoing financial and economic crisis in Asia and its continuing adverse effects on the economic and social development prospects of the countries of the region, as well as the impact of the Asian financial crisis on the global economy and the globalization process, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific reaffirmed its position as the main economic and social development centre within the United Nations system for the Asia and Pacific region. It requested the Executive Secretary to :

(a) Continue to undertake detailed analyses of the financial and economic crisis, paying particular attention to the role of financial markets, and to present options to members and associate members which they may use, as appropriate, as inputs in the formulation of their relevant national policies, with a view to ensuring the attraction of a steady inflow of private capital;

(b) Continue to study the social and economic consequences of the crisis, paying particular attention to alleviation of the suffering of disadvantaged groups;

(c) Enhance the exchange of information with regard to the policies adopted and measures undertaken by members and associate members to address the impact of the crisis;

(d) Undertake a study on possible regional mechanisms for the exchange of information and early warning systems in relation to the financial and economic situation in the countries of the region, with a focus on crisis prevention and reduction of the vulnerability of countries to economic and financial turmoil, including (i) examination of related mechanisms currently in place or under consideration in various international and regional institutions; (ii) analysis of the content, data quality and frequency of information to be provided by member States; (iii) recommendations for future activities, including ways and means of making regional contributions to global monitoring and surveillance programmes of the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral entities, while complementing, but not duplicating, efforts already taken by multilateral financial institutions;

(e) Pay special attention to the implications of the financial crisis for the developing countries, particularly the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries, as well as the economies in transition, by providing them with appropriate advisory services and technical assistance;

(f) Cooperate with the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant international and regional institutions in undertaking the analyses and studies mentioned in the present resolution;

(g) Report to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Resolution 55/3. Strengthening the cooperation and support of nations in the Asian and Pacific region in addressing the year 2000 problem

20. The Commission, having recognized that the increasing interdependence of economies and the interconnected nature of computer systems call for concerted and coordinated action at the regional and global levels, urged all members and associate members to take early and effective action to bring their countries to the highest possible level of year 2000 (Y2K) readiness, not only for their own benefit but also to minimize adverse Y2K effects on vital sectors of other countries. It called upon them to practise open disclosure policies and

enhance the sharing of information across borders with regard to Y2K readiness, best practices, lessons learned, embedded systems, and Y2K failures and successes. It further urged them to expedite the remediation of their systems to guarantee the continued availability of basic infrastructure services, to use public information channels to urge the private sector to become Y2K-compliant and to disclose its readiness status, and to develop contingency plans to address the possibility of large-scale failures in the public and private sectors. The Commission also called for facilitating exchange of national experiences on the Y2K problem, for sharing of information and expertise available on the subject with the member States, and appealed for forging regional and global cooperation to ensure a timely and effective response to the Y2K challenge and to work together to address the threats that the problem poses globally. The international organizations and the United Nations system were requested to collaborate on the matter, and to assist the various disadvantaged groups of countries. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission annually until the fifty-seventh session on the progress achieved and the difficulties encountered by members and associate members in addressing the Y2K problem.

Resolution 55/4. Towards a society for all ages: Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific

21. The Commission endorsed the Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, adopted on 1 October 1998 by the Regional Meeting on a Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, and urged all members and associate members to take early and effective action to implement the Plan of Action and to continue to give full support to the implementation of relevant regional mandates and resolutions of the General Assembly concerning older persons. It called upon members and associate members that have not yet done so to set up and strengthen national mechanisms on ageing, *inter alia*, to enable them to coordinate the observance of the International Year of Older Persons, and to set specific time-bound targets on ageing and related issues, in the light of the needs and aspirations of older persons, in keeping with indigenous traditions and their milieux. It also called upon all sectors of civil society, non-governmental organizations and private organizations to assist in the effective implementation of the Macau Declaration and Plan of Action and their respective national plans of action on older persons. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to:

(a) Provide full support and assistance to members and associate members in the immediate implementation of the Plan of Action, including the provision of technical assistance, in the establishment of specific time-bound national goals, targets and policies on ageing and the coordination of regional and subregional activities;

(b) Report to the Commission in 2000 on the observance of the Year and on progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action, and on the basis of consultations with members and associate members, to recommend further action and initiatives to achieve the goals and targets contained therein;

(c) Report to the Commission, on a regular five-year basis, on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Plan of Action;

(d) Continue to provide support and technical assistance to members and associate members, as well as other actors, in the commemoration of the Year, bearing in mind its goals and objectives, and to consider means of enhancing national and regional initiatives for older persons;

(e) Continue to facilitate the exchange of national experience and information and to collect, analyse and disseminate data, publications and other materials concerning older persons, including the utilization of the Internet, electronic facilities and other means, within existing and available resources.

Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development

22. The Commission held the view that the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific in the year 2000 would be an important occasion to review the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 1996–2000, and to discuss future directions for the region. It would also provide an opportunity to develop regional inputs to the 10-year review by the General Assembly of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Commission welcomed the offer of Japan to host the Fourth Ministerial Conference at Kitakyushu City, Fukuoka, Japan, to be organized back-to-back with the Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific.

Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

23. The Commission reviewed the preparations for the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Application for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, to be hosted by India at New Delhi, from 15 to 20 November 1999, and reiterated its support. The Commission noted that in conjunction with the Conference, a science symposium as well as a technical exhibition on the theme "Space 99" would be organized. It urged members and associate members to participate actively in the Conference and other related events.

Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asia and the Pacific region

24. The Commission strongly supported and adopted the Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asia and the Pacific Region. It was pleased to note that the World Tourism Organization and several other organizations had expressed their willingness to support and cooperate in the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Fifty-sixth session of the Commission

25. The Commission decided to hold its fifty-sixth session at Bangkok in April 2000. The exact dates would be decided through consultations. It also decided on the theme topic for that session, which would be "Development through globalization and partnership in the twenty-first century: an Asia-Pacific perspective for integrating developing countries and economies in transition in international trading system on a fair and equitable basis".

C. Economic Commission for Africa

26. The Economic Commission for Africa, at its thirty-third session, also adopted the two resolutions, the motion of support and the ministerial statement summarized below, which are brought to the attention of the Council.

Resolution 831 (XXXIII). Economic Report on Africa, 1999

27. In this resolution, the Commission appreciated the quality of the *Economic Report on Africa, 1999*, particularly the new orientation, the findings of the report and the new indicators, which provide a better understanding of the region's economies from the African perspective as essential elements for formulating appropriate policies. It commended the Commission secretariat for its work on the development of a set of indicators on which short- and long-term economic performance and sustainability can be measured and evaluated. It also requested the Executive Secretary of ECA to continue refining the indicators developed in the report, in collaboration with member countries and the region's development partners. The Commission finally called upon other development partners to collaborate with it in furthering the development of appropriate strategies to address Africa's socio-economic challenges, including those generated by conflicts.

Resolution 832 (XXXIII). HIV/AIDS in Africa

28. In this resolution, the Commission recalled the declarations and decisions of the heads of State and Government of the Organization of Africa Unity in which they committed themselves to take specific actions to prevent the transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in their respective countries. It appreciated the initiative taken by the Executive Secretary of ECA to place this major issue on the agenda of the present session. It requested the Executive Secretary of ECA to work closely with the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and co-sponsors and any other institutions to gather, analyse and disseminate data on the economic impact of HIV to facilitate policy development and programme planning. It also called upon member States to intensify their efforts in the fight against the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and to prevent transmission by making available adequate resources and involving all concerned sectors of the economy and all interested partners, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Motion of support on the impact of currency devaluation on pension benefits of General Service and National Officers of the Economic Commission for Africa

29. The Commission adopted a motion in which it took note of the statement made by ECA management on staff-management relations at ECA and the presentation of the President of the ECA Staff Union on the adverse impact of currency devaluation on pension benefits of General Service and National Officers at Addis Ababa and other duty stations away from Headquarters. It expressed its support for all actions that are required to effectively resolve the pension problem of this category of staff.

Ministerial statement

30. At the end of the session, the Commission adopted a ministerial statement, in which it was acknowledged that the session was taking place at a key time in Africa's development history: a time of recovery and fragile growth; a time of globalization of trade, investment and financial markets; a time of caution due to the aftermath of the economic crisis in Asia and its contagious effects; a time when new analysis of Africa's development situation presented a way forward; and a time when Africa's development partners were seriously considering the resolution of Africa's debt crisis.

31. The statement welcomed the recommendations of the *Economic Report on Africa, 1999*, and particularly noted the new focus on fundamental factors, which needed to be addressed in order to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015. After noting that the continent

lacked the fundamentals for sustained future growth at rates required to realize the poverty reduction targets, the statement underlined the fact that it was appropriate to make poverty reduction the overarching objective of development efforts. While continuing their macroeconomic reform programmes, African countries should simultaneously pay attention to human capital development and building requisite institutions and infrastructure to achieve sustainable growth, poverty reduction and macroeconomic stability. The statement also noted that HIV/AIDS had become a scourge and a fundamental factor in Africa's economic and social prospects, thus requiring concerted and decisive action on the part of member States through the adoption of concrete measures for fighting the disease.

Lesson from the recent financial crisis

32. In the statement, the Ministers agreed that one of the key lessons for Africa of the current crisis is the need to strengthen supervisory and regulatory mechanisms to ensure transparency in financial transaction and improve corporate governance, in consonance with the principles of financial liberalization and the development of financial and capital markets. They welcomed the formation, at the initiative of the Group of Seven (G-7) major industrialized countries, of an ad hoc intergovernmental working group to address issues relating to the proposed reform of the international financial and monetary system, and stressed the importance of adequate African representation in this group or any other group set up for a similar purpose. The statement added that the reforms envisaged should facilitate a steady provision, by the global financial system, of development finance to the less developed countries to cushion the effects of financial crises, when they occur.

Financing development

33. Recognizing the importance of domestic resource mobilization in ensuring sustainable development, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to raising private savings, including strengthening and improving the reliability of thrift institutions and incentives to save, as well as broadening the range of financial savings instruments. Having reviewed and shared experiences with tax reforms in their various countries, the Ministers agreed to reinforce macroeconomic stability and deepen financial market and institutional reforms, as well as to ensure sound interest and exchange-rate policy management so as to enhance private and public savings. The Ministers stressed the critical role of capital markets in raising the level of domestic savings, attracting foreign private investment, and stemming and reversing capital flight. In this regard, the session proposed the development of a subregional approach to capital markets development.

34. On the external side, the Ministers particularly welcomed new proposals for addressing Africa's debt crisis, noting that these proposals reinforced the call made at their meeting in 1997, on reviewing the terms of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, to enable more countries to benefit from debt relief. The proposals coming from a number of G-7 countries, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other United Nations agencies underscore the need to resolve Africa's debt crisis within a holistic and integrated framework of financing development and reducing poverty. Beyond the need to improve the present debt relief arrangements, the Ministers took note of the idea of referring the issue of debt sustainability to an independent body composed of eminent persons with a thorough understanding of financial, development and social issues, and whose selection would be by mutual agreement between creditors and debtors, with a commitment from creditors to consider cancellation of all debts deemed unsustainable.

Official development assistance

35. Against the backdrop of a reduction in levels of official development assistance (ODA) flows, the Ministers noted that while there is a need to reduce dependency on aid in the long term, aid levels should be increased because of the improving policy environment across Africa, and also because of the importance of aid in achieving fundamental development objectives. To improve the effectiveness of aid and thus ensure sustained aid flows, the Ministers emphasized the need to foster a new donor-beneficiary relationship in which multi-donor programmes would focus on an African-driven agenda, the need for strengthening institutional aid delivery mechanisms and the importance of a strategic vision of aid.

Trade and foreign investment

36. While deploring the continent's marginalization in an era of increased globalization and liberalization of the world economy, the Ministers urged African countries to assume primary responsibility for restructuring their economies to meet the challenges and seize opportunities offered by the new global trading and economic environment. Further convinced that trade and investment are essential components of any credible strategy to accelerate Africa's development and sustain the high rates of economic growth needed to reduce poverty, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to regional economic cooperation and integration, in line with the exigencies of expanding markets, as an essential step for integration into the global economy and as a means of enhancing the competitiveness of African economies. The Ministers emphasized the need for deepening political and economic reforms (including financial sector reforms) to create an appropriate policy framework and improve the image of Africa as a safe place for trade and investment. They also emphasized the need to strengthen institutional capacity and improve information flows for economic development.

Capital flight and its impact on development

37. The Ministers noted with concern that while striving to attract foreign investment for development, Africa has a larger proportion of wealth held overseas by residents than any other continent. They urged that increasing domestic investment as well as repatriating these financial resources should be a priority for African Governments in view of their important contribution to financing the continent's development. They also noted that in many respects, the requirements for attracting foreign capital are the same as for mobilizing African capital: creating an enabling environment. They resolved to take the necessary steps to stem and reverse capital flight, focusing on policies that create and sustain a consistent and stable macroeconomic policy environment, and promoting capital and financial markets development, as well as resolving the problem of unsustainably high external debts.

38. The Ministers recognized that corruption is an impediment to investment and development, since it increases transaction costs and its unpredictability makes returns on investment uncertain. They resolved to strengthen measures to fight it, using political, economic and legal policy instruments, including advocating reforms in certain aspects of the banking regulations of countries that create a "safe haven" for corruptly obtained funds.

Programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa

39. The Ministers were pleased to note that ECA had completed its reform and restructuring programme. They observed that the *Economic Report on Africa, 1999* was a major output of a revitalized ECA. They encouraged member States as well as Africa's development partners to incorporate some of the recommendations of the *Report* into their

policies and programmes and make useful suggestions to ECA on improving the *Report* in the future. The Ministers also commended ECA for strengthening its operations at headquarters and extending its outreach to member States through the subregional development centres. They noted that the programme of work and priorities of ECA for the period 2000–2001 were not only appropriate but also germane to the concerns and requirements of member States. They expressed concern, however, that the budgetary provisions of the United Nations may not be sufficient to carry out these programmes. In this regard, the Ministers called on Africa's development partners to support the programme of work with appropriate financial resources to ensure its success.

D. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

40. At its twentieth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia adopted the resolution summarized below, which is brought to the attention of the Council.

Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2000–2001

41. The Commission noted with appreciation that the ESCWA secretariat had conducted consultations with member States as well as relevant United Nations agencies and organizations in planning the priorities proposed for each of the five substantive subprogrammes. It further noted with appreciation that the secretariat had subsequently undertaken consultations with the Advisory Committee (composed of the heads of diplomatic missions or their representatives in the host country of ESCWA and a representative of the host country) in connection with the defining of priorities for the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2000–2001. The Commission reiterated its conviction that early consultation regarding programme planning is the basic mechanism for arriving at a common view of the region's priorities and rationalizing the activities undertaken by the various United Nations agencies. It requested the Executive Secretary to distribute this programme to ESCWA member States and the United Nations agencies concerned once it has been approved by the General Assembly.